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FBIS TRENDS -- 20 JUNE -- EAST-WEST RELATIONS

WR210007 FOREIGN BROADCAST INFORMATION SERVICE MEDIA ANALYSIS

MOSCOW IGNORES PRESIDENT REAGAN'S SUMMIT OFFER

SUMMARY

MOSCOW'S FAILURE TO RESPOND TO PRESIDENT REAGAN'S OFFER OF A U.S.-SOVIET SUMMIT SUGGESTS THAT THE LIKELIHOOD OF SOVIET AGREEMENT TO SUCH A MEETING PRIOR TO NOVEMBER REMAINS LOW. MOSCOW'S SILENCE SEEMS TO STEM FROM A DESIRE TO FOCUS ON DISCREDITING U.S. POLICY TOWARD THE USSR AND NOT FROM ANY NEED TO CONSIDER SERIOUSLY HOW TO RESPOND.

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SOVIET MEDIA THUS FAR HAVE PAID SCANT ATTENTION TO THE PRESIDENT'S OFFER, BUT THEY CONTINUE TO DISMISS IN GENERAL TERMS ALL ADMINISTRATION PROPOSITIONS OF INTEREST IN NEGOTIATIONS AS ELECTORAL PLOYS. THE MOST DIRECT SOVIET COMMENT ON THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS CAME IN A MOSCOW RADIO ENGLISH-LANGUAGE BROADCAST TO NORTH AMERICA ON 18 JUNE THAT EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM ABOUT THE SINCERITY OF THE OFFER. THE REPORT IMPLIED THE PRESIDENT'S OFFER LACKED CREDIBILITY SINCE "LESS THAN A WEEK AGO," HE HAD SAID "NO POINT" IN A SUMMIT MEETING. ANOTHER ENGLISH-LANGUAGE RADIO COMMENTARY--ON 16 JUNE ON MOSCOW RADIO'S WORLD SERVICE--CLAIMED THAT THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS ON A SUMMIT WERE ADDRESSED "FIRST AND FOREMOST" TO U.S. VOTERS AND ALLEGED THAT WHEN FACED WITH A CONCRETE AGENDA, WASHINGTON "ALWAYS BLOCKS" SUCH TALKS WITH PRELIMINARY CONDITIONS "UNACCEPTABLE TO THE OTHER SIDE." SOVIET DOMESTIC MEDIA HAVE NOT EVEN REPORTED ON THE PRESIDENT'S SUMMIT REMARKS.

SINCE CHERNENKO BECAME GENERAL SECRETARY IN FEBRUARY, SOVIET LEADERS HAVE NOT COMMENTED DIRECTLY ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A SUMMIT MEETING WITH PRESIDENT REAGAN, BUT THEY HAVE INDICATED THEIR LACK OF INTEREST THROUGH MORE GENERAL COMMENTS ON NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE ADMINISTRATION. IN A 4 JUNE SPEECH AT A DINNER FOR VISITING ROMANIAN LEADER CEAUSESCU, CHERNENKO REPEATED MOSCOW'S STANDARD FORMULA ON EAST-WEST NEGOTIATIONS--THE USSR FAVORS REACHING AGREEMENTS "IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY AND EQUAL SECURITY"--AND CLAIMED THAT THE UNITED STATES, ON THE OTHER HAND, WAS AIMING FOR SUPERIORITY. FOREIGN MINISTER GROMYKO WAS EVEN BLUNT IN A 27 FEBRUARY SPEECH, CHARGING THAT THE CURRENT U.S. ADMINISTRATION HAD NOT ONLY "DESTROYED" THE GENEVA TALKS ON REDUCING NUCLEAR ARMS BUT HAD ALSO "DONE CONSIDERABLE WORK TO UPSET AND, WHAT IS MORE, DESTROY" AGREEMENTS SIGNED BY ITS PREDECESSORS.

COMMENTING TO FOREIGN AUDIENCES, LOWER LEVEL OFFICIALS HAVE EXPRESSED RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE DESIRABILITY OF A SUMMIT MEETING, AT LEAST DURING THE U.S. ELECTION CAMPAIGN. MOST RECENTLY, CENTRAL COMMITTEE OFFICIAL LEONID ZAMYATIN, AT A 14 JUNE PRESS CONFERENCE SHORTLY BEFORE PRESIDENT REAGAN ADDRESSED THE SUBJECT, ASSERTED, ACCORDING TO THE NEW YORK TIMES, THAT A SUMMIT MEETING REQUIRES "PROPER PREPARATION" AND AN AGENDA NECESSITATING THE "PARTICIPATION OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY." ALTHOUGH EXTENSIVE PORTIONS OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE WERE PUBLICIZED BY SOVIET MEDIA, ZAMYATIN'S REMARKS ON A SUMMIT WERE OMITTED. GEORGIY ARBATOV, THE DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA, WAS EVEN MORE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE UTILITY OF A SUMMIT IN A MARCH INTERVIEW ON WEST GERMAN RADIO, SAYING HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT A SUMMIT COULD YIELD. IZVESTIYA'S WELL-CONNECTED AND CANDID POLITICAL OBSERVER ALEKSANDR BOVIN HAS COMMENTED MOST DIRECTLY ON THE REASONS FOR MOSCOW'S SKEPTICISM ABOUT A SUMMIT MEETING WITH PRESIDENT REAGAN THIS YEAR. IN REMARKS ON A CZECHOSLOVAK RADIO PROGRAM ON 2 MARCH, BOVIN SAID HE WOULD NOT ADVOCATE SUCH A MEETING BECAUSE "IT WOULD MEAN THROWING A LIFELINE TO THE PRESIDENT IN AN ELECTION YEAR."

BACKGROUND

MOSCOW'S CURRENT DISINTEREST IS A STRIKING RETREAT FROM ITS MORE POSITIVE POSITION ON A SUMMIT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PRESIDENT'S TERM OF OFFICE. IN HIS ADDRESS TO THE 26TH CPSU CONGRESS IN FEBRUARY 1981, BREZHNEV EXPRESSED AN UNQUALIFIED DESIRE FOR A MEETING WITH THE NEW U.S. PRESIDENT. THE CURRENT STATE OF RELATIONS, HE SAID, DEMANDED "DIALOGUE AT ALL LEVELS" AND EXPERIENCE HAD SHOWN SUMMIT MEETINGS TO BE "THE DECISIVE LINK." BUT BY DECEMBER 1981, IN AN "INTERVIEW" WITH NBC TELEVISION REPORTED IN PRAVDA THE GENERAL SECRETARY HAD BEGUN TO QUALIFY HIS ENDORSEMENT OF A SUMMIT BY ADDING THAT "NATURALLY, APPROPRIATE PREPARATIONS ARE REQUIRED" FOR A SUCCESSFUL MEETING.

DURING ANDROPOV'S TENURE AS GENERAL SECRETARY, MOSCOW EXPRESSED INCREASING SKEPTICISM ABOUT U.S.-SOVIET SUMMITRY. ANDROPOV'S FIRST COMMENT AS A SOVIET LEADER ON THE SUBJECT GIVEN IN A DECEMBER 1982 INTERVIEW WITH A U.S. JOURNALIST AND PUBLISHED IN PRAVDA, ESSENTIALLY REPEATED BREZHNEV'S DECEMBER 1981 REMARKS. LESS THAN TWO MONTHS LATER, IN A FEBRUARY PRAVDA INTERVIEW, THE GENERAL SECRETARY REJECTED AS "NOT SERIOUS" PRESIDENT REGAN'S PROPOSAL FOR A SUMMIT TO SIGN A BILATERAL AGREEMENT BANNING ALL U.S. AND SOVIET INTERMEDIATE-RANGE LAND-BASED NUCLEAR MISSILES. HE CLAIMED THAT THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL WOULD MAKE A SUMMIT CONDITIONAL UPON SOVIET ACQUIESCENCE TO A "PATENTLY UNACCEPTABLE" PROPOSAL.

THE MOST AUTHORITATIVE ARTICULATION OF THE KREMLIN'S POSTURE ON A SUMMIT IN THE PAST YEAR CAME IN A JUNE 1983 TASS INTERVIEW WITH FOREIGN MINISTER GROMYKO WHICH ADDED NEW "PRECONDITIONS" FOR SUCH A MEETING, INCLUDING "A CERTAIN DEGREE OF MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING ON MAJOR ISSUES" AND "A DESIRE ON BOTH SIDES TO ACTUALLY STRIVE FOR POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS; EVEN BETTER, FOR A BREAKTHROUGH" IN RELATIONS. HE ARGUED THAT THESE PRECONDITIONS WERE ABSENT BECAUSE U.S. POLICY ON RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION "DOES NOT PURSUE ANY CONSTRUCTIVE GOALS AT ALL." ONLY WHEN "REAL SIGNS OF READINESS TO CONDUCT AFFAIRS IN A SERIOUS AND CONSTRUCTIVE MANNER" ARE PRESENT, HE CONCLUDED, WILL THE POSSIBILITY OF A SUMMIT APPEAR IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT.

(ENDALL)

21 JUN 0058Z JPR